

# Adding Fuel to the Fire: Energy Resources and International Negotiation in the Eastern Mediterranean

Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) for Intermediate Courses  
Student Materials

The Undergraduate Experiential Learning Project

## ELA Overview

In this role-play activity, students simulate a United Nations summit aimed at preventing interstate conflict over vast undersea gas and oil fields discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean. The discovery of these valuable resources has sparked tension between parties already embroiled in longstanding conflicts over identity and territory, namely the Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot Administration/TRNC,<sup>1</sup> Israel, and Lebanon. The UN summit is an attempt to obtain the agreement of all parties to negotiate disputes within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a treaty which several of the parties have not yet ratified.

The simulation includes roles for UN mediators and representatives of each conflict party, as well as energy companies, environmental advocates, and the European Union. This simulation uses a contemporary scenario to enhance understanding of the complex dynamics of conflict and negotiation at interstate, regional, and international levels, and of identity, interests and international law as potential drivers of escalation or resolution. Students are asked to conduct background research, to represent conflict parties, and to engage in dialogue with other parties in an effort to agree on a framework for negotiating the rights to valuable undersea resources.

International conflicts are all too often framed in two-dimensional fashion, as encounters between two clearly defined opposing parties or positions. This activity is designed to provide students with an experience of the multi-dimensional nature of contemporary international negotiations, through the frame of an actual resource dispute involving diverse stakeholders - states, territories, companies, and international organizations - all embedded in an elaborate web of multi-lateral relationships. By striving to represent any single party to the dispute effectively, students become immersed in the intricacies of negotiation strategy and the dilemmas of decision-making, as they face the tradeoffs between the incentives of global commerce and the politics of regional conflict.

The development of each ELA represents the collective effort of faculty and project staff of the Undergraduate Experiential Learning Project at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR). The primary authors of *Adding Fuel to the Fire* are Athanasios Gatsias, Gul Mescioglu-Gur, and Dr. Ned Lazarus. -

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<sup>1</sup> TRNC: Since Turkey's 1974 military intervention in the Cyprus conflict, the north of the island has been an enclave governed by the Turkish-Cypriot minority. Turkey maintains a large military presence there, and is the only state to grant official recognition to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

# ELA Structure

## Overall Schedule

The activity takes place in three stages:

### Stage 1 Introduction

Overview of conflict, the activity, distribution of roles (60 minutes)

### Stage 2 UN Summit Round I

- a. Parties' official opening statements and responses (90 minutes)
- b. Establishing the negotiation agenda (30 minutes)

### Stage 3 UN Summit Round II

- c. Position statements and clarification (45 minutes)
- d. Negotiations, Concluding Vote, Debrief (75 minutes)

Times are approximate, estimated according to typical class size and class period duration; the structure and duration of the activity can be modified to fit different schedules and class sizes.



Marine Oil and Gas Drilling Platform. Photo Credit: Arbyreed, Flickr.

# Resources/Background Materials

The following online resources can provide helpful background information on all parties to the summit, Eastern Mediterranean political dynamics, and the issues surrounding maritime hydrocarbon resources in the region.

## Online Reports

*The Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO)* has published a comprehensive overview of the issue and positions of parties (as of early 2013) including maps: [http://www.prio.no/Global/upload/Cyprus/Publications/Hydrocarbons\\_Report-ENG.pdf](http://www.prio.no/Global/upload/Cyprus/Publications/Hydrocarbons_Report-ENG.pdf)

*The International Crisis Group (ICG)* has published a report on the resource dispute, and on the sub-conflicts involved (Cyprus, EU-Turkey, Israel-Turkey, Israel-Lebanon): <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/cyprus/216-aphrodites-gift-can-cypriot-gas-power-a-new-dialogue.pdf>

The ICG site also includes periodic reports on multiple Eastern Mediterranean conflicts, which can be highly informative for the specific parties involved, including:

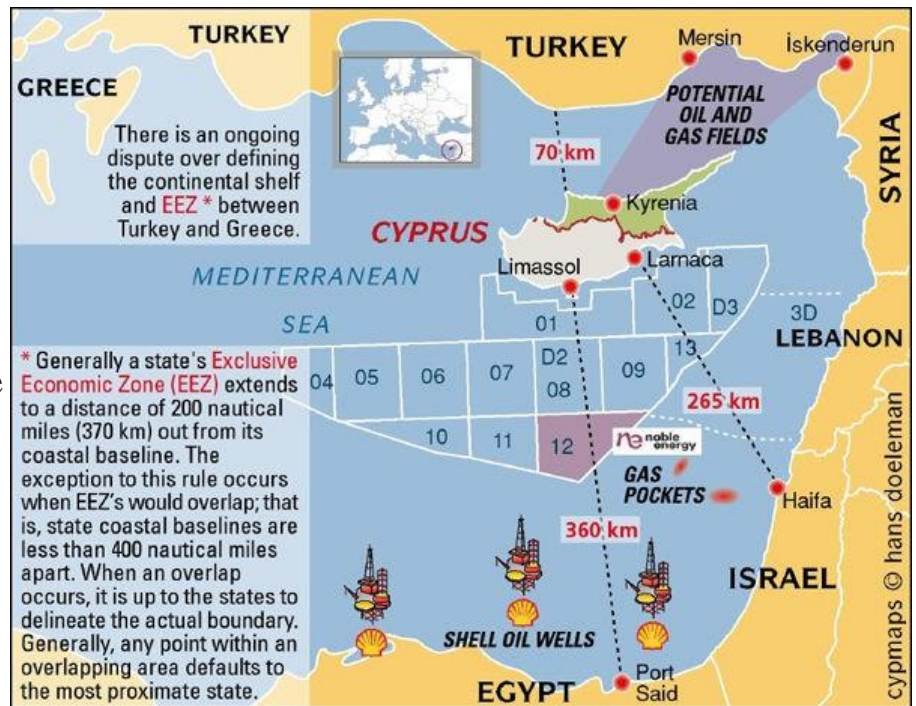
- Cyprus Conflict
- Aegean dispute
- EU/Turkey relations
- Arab/Israeli conflict

The **BBC** site also features brief overviews of regional conflicts.

**Al-Monitor.com** features excellent coverage of Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East news by local journalists.

## UNCLOS/UN Law of the Sea

The history and content of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea can be accessed online from the *United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea*: [http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/convention\\_historical\\_perspective.htm](http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_historical_perspective.htm)



Cyprus and East Mediterranean EEZ Map. Photo Credit: Hans Doeleman.



All students should search their own party's English-language news sites for articles related to the conflicts and resource issues most important to their party. This can be done through keyword searches ("natural gas," "offshore drilling," "Law of the Sea," "Cyprus conflict," "Leviathan," "Aphrodite," "EEZ," etc.).



Map of Cyprus. Photo Credit: Nations Online Project.

Additionally, all government parties (all state parties, UN, EU, Turkish Cypriots/TRNC) should research their own official sites - e.g. Ministries of Foreign Affairs and/or Energy.

The following news sites are recommended for information on specific parties:

**Energy Industry:** *Noble Energy, Delek Group, Globes, Energy Tribune, Wall Street Journal, Natural Gas Europe*

**Environmental Advocates:** *Offshore-environment.com, Green Prophet, Mideast Environment, Greenpeace, Natural Gas Europe*

**European Union:** *EU Observer, Europa.eu*

**Greece:** *Ekatherimini, Tovima*

**Israel:** *Ynetnews, Haaretz, Globes, The Times of Israel*

**Lebanon:** *Daily Star, Lebanon Now, Naharnet, Al-Akhbar*

**Republic of Cyprus/Greek Cypriots:** *Cyprus Mail, Famagusta Gazette*

**Turkey:** *Hurriyet Daily News, Today's Zaman, Journal of Turkish Weekly, Turkishpress.com*

**Turkish Cypriots/TRNC:** *NorthCyprusNews.com, LGC News, Kibkom Times*

**United Nations:** *UNCLOS, UNFICYP (United Nations Force in Cyprus) Resources: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unficypr/resources.shtml>*

# European Union Narrative

Cyprus, the island with the troubled past, is once again in the spotlight of the international agenda. Current hydrocarbon search in the Eastern Mediterranean, economic hardship, and Cyprus's proximity to the current political changes in the region (i.e. Arab Spring and Syrian conflict), place the discussion on the future of the country - and the region of E. Mediterranean in general - high on the agenda of the European Union. The EU and Cyprus - the fifth EU member-state to seek financial assistance - currently collaborate closely to restructure Cypriot economy, which in turn will strengthen the country economically and politically. To rescue the island from economic breakdown, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank (aka Troika) reached an agreement with the Republic of Cyprus in March 2013 on a macroeconomic adjustment program in return for a bailout of 10 billion euros.

The hydrocarbon reserves found in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus in Eastern Mediterranean could be a major resource for the recovery of RoC's bankrupted economy. These hydrocarbon resources could also prove significant for the EU in its efforts to diversify its energy resources. At present, the RoC's entire estimated gas reserves of 198bcm would only supply less than six months of the annual gas consumption of the EU, which in 2011 was 400bcm. To express it another way, if one assumes that natural gas could be supplied to the EU for 25 years - a typical period for gas supplies - the estimated gas in Block 12 of the RoC's EEZ is only enough to supply 2% of the EU needs per year (or 5% if combined with Israeli gas). However, the discoveries are still significant. First, because even a small amount helps the EU diversify natural gas resources and decrease its dependence on Russia. At present, the EU depends on Russia for 25% of its gas imports, and diversifying energy resources and supply routes is one of the EU priorities. Second, exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean has really only just begun. There may be considerably more gas; therefore, it is not inconceivable that gas from Cyprus and Israel could eventually reach perhaps 10% of Europe's annual gas needs.

Since the beginning of Greek Cypriot gas explorations, Turkish Cypriots and Turkey took a harsh stand against unilateral gas activity by the RoC, arguing that such unilateral actions put at risk the ongoing negotiations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots toward reunification of the island. A key Turkish and Turkish Cypriot argument here is that the Greek Cypriot-controlled RoC cannot appear as representing the whole island, neither can it sign an international agreement in the name of both communities; this neglects the inherent rights of Turkish Cypriots on the resources of the island. In addition, for Turkey, the EEZ claimed by RoC significantly overlaps maritime areas that belong to the Turkish EEZ. In its turn, the RoC, being the only internationally recognized government on the island, declares that it only exercises its sovereign rights.

Within this environment, the role of the EU is a tough one. It tries to keep a balance between an EU member, the RoC, and an EU candidate, Turkey. On the one hand, the EU acknowledges the strategic importance of Turkey as an energy hub between the EU and the Caucasus; on the other hand, it urges Turkey to refrain from any kind of threat or action that could negatively affect the peaceful settlement of the conflict between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Historically, the tensions between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and Turkey have posed challenges to EU-Turkish relations, especially after the accession of the RoC in the EU in May 2004, despite Greek Cypriot rejection of the

Annan plan in April 2004. In 1990, the government of the Republic of Cyprus applied for EU-membership in the name of the whole island. The accession negotiations started in March 1998 and were completed in December 2002. As mentioned above, Cyprus was admitted to the EU in May 2004. However, a specific protocol on Cyprus is attached to the Accession Treaty, which foresees that in the absence of a settlement, the application of the *Acquis Communautaire* shall be suspended in the northern part of the island until the European Council decides unanimously otherwise, on the basis of a proposal by the European Commission. For Turkey, finding a solution in the decades-long Cyprus problem is important, as the divided island has become a key obstacle in its efforts to secure EU membership. Since 2005, Turkey's EU accession process has been painfully slow. Of the 35 chapters, Turkey has only opened 13 since talks began in the fall of 2005 due to Greek Cypriot veto. An EU progress report published in October 2011 calls Turkey to meet its customs union obligations within the EU and implement the Additional Protocol by opening its seaports and airports to Greek Cypriot traffic. Turkey, in its turn, accuses the EU for not keeping up with its 2004 promise of allowing direct trade with North Cyprus, after the rejection of the Annon Plan by the Greek Cypriots. A draft EU regulation that would allow the north to trade directly with the EU was rejected by the European Parliament in June 2010.

In addition, a factor that poses extra obstacles to stability and enhanced cooperation in the region of Eastern Mediterranean is the tensions between Turkey and Israel. Over the last years, as a result of a series of unfortunate developments and rhetorical escalations, bilateral relations between Turkey and Israel - not long ago strategic allies in the region - have been suspended. The most prominent of those incidents was the Mavi Marmara crisis in May 2010, which resulted in the killing of nine Turkish citizens by Israeli armed forces. In addition, Turkey has repeatedly protested against the 2010 Israeli-RoC agreement for the delimitation of their maritime borders and joint gas explorations. Turkey views with suspicion the alliance that blossomed between Greek Cyprus and Israel in the past two years, especially on energy and defense issues, and argues that it should be revised carefully to ensure that the rights of Turkish Cypriots are not infringed upon with regard to the island's natural gas and oil reserves. It is clear that a reversion of the negative sentiments currently prevailing in the Israeli-Turkish relations could lead to a much-needed positive breakthrough in the region. The recent apology by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the Mavi Marmara incident and his promise that Israel would ease its blockade in Gaza could be a first step toward normalization of the two countries' relationship. In order to diversify its oil and gas supply, the EU needs both countries and a Turkish-Israeli rapprochement would be a favorable development for the EU interests and could create positive momentum in the region; among others, it could lead to increased cooperation and better coordination of the international efforts in Syria.

As European Union officials, you sincerely believe that the energy resources found in the Eastern Mediterranean should constitute an opportunity and a new beginning for peace. Within this environment, you are invited to a UN Summit on Energy Resources and International Conflict in Eastern Mediterranean as the delegation of the EU. There, you will have the opportunity to come together with all influential parties and discuss the future of the natural gas and oil reserves and the prospects of cooperation and peace in the region. You are an important actor in this meeting; you are expected to be actively involved in the process and help find solutions in regards to the issues that the concerned parties collectively face.

# About the Project

This Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) has been developed as part of the Undergraduate Experiential Learning Project (UERP), U.S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)-funded initiative that aims to enhance Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) pedagogy in order to improve undergraduate learning.

The CAR field is uniquely positioned to deliver educational experiences that help students make the crucial link between abstract theories and practical application through learning activities such as: conflict mapping, intervention design, role plays, and simulations. The ELAs developed as part of the UERP advance specific learning outcomes, including critical thinking, problem solving, and perspective taking.

Each ELA produced through the UERP has been designed either to augment existing course curricula or to be used as a stand-alone activity. Instructors are encouraged to adapt activities to meet the needs of their specific learning environments, including class size and course objectives.

All UERP project materials are available for public use and may be reproduced without permission. Please ensure that all printed materials display both the FIPSE and George Mason University logos as well as the project URL (<http://scar.gmu.edu/experientiallearningproject/home>).

As your partners in advancing undergraduate education, we are committed to improving the quality of the learning experience and encourage all feedback and recommendations to support that commitment. Additionally, we welcome stories that highlight moments of student insight that arise from participation in these activities. If you are interested in supporting the collection of data for ongoing research, please contact us through our webpage. ▀



## School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

3351 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 4D3, Arlington, VA 22201

## Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education

1990 K St. NW, 6th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20006